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AUTHOR Lewis, Angela; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Collaborative efforts between university methods courses and elementary classroom teachers provide laboratory experiences that facilitate preservice teachers understanding of thematic instructional approaches to teaching elementary science and social studies. Preservice teachers in these field-based programs learn to apply the theories to which they were exposed in university courses. The major emphasis of the methods classes in curriculum and instruction at the University of Montevallo (Alabama), specifically the elementary school science and social studies block, is the integration of content and practice. The collaborative nature of the model provides opportunities for preservice teachers, public school teachers, children, and university faculty to develop a better understanding of inquiry-based content integration. This laboratory model provides content enrichment for elementary students, application and implementation for preservice teachers, and updated curriculum modeling for classroom teachers. Three attachments provide elements of the model: (1) Requirements for Individual Show Portfolio; (2) Format of Theme Unit; and (3) Oral History Presentation. (Contains 23 references.) (MAH)

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Understanding Thematic Teaching/Theory to Practice

Angela Lewis
David M. Martin
Judy Stone
University of Montevallo

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Understanding Thematic Teaching / Theory to Practice: Linking University Methods to the Community

Collaborative efforts between university methods courses and elementary classroom teachers provide laboratory experiences that facilitate preservice teachers' understanding of thematic instructional approaches to teaching elementary science and social studies.

Teacher education needs to move in the direction of cooperative efforts between public schools and teacher education programs. These efforts should be designed so that all parties involved have input. In a field based teacher education program, preservice teachers get to apply the theory they are exposed to in university courses.

University methods classes in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Montevallo are blocked together in order to provide teaching experiences for preservice teachers with elementary students. These classes provide an instructional model designed to give preservice teachers concrete experiences that allow for the application of theory to a real practical school situation. The collaborative nature of the model encourages opportunities for preservice teachers, public school teachers, children, and university faculty to develop a better understanding of inquiry based content integration. The strength of the model is that all parties involved have input into the process which has allowed for modification of the model from semester to semester. The innovative nature of the model is that this shared cooperation allows for greater understanding of the theory on the part of preservice as well as public school teachers.

The major emphasis in the blocked methods classes, more specifically, the social studies and science combined block, is to integrate content throughout the curriculum. In the university classroom setting preservice teachers participate in a theme unit based on a social science collection model. Preservice teachers are also

required to write a theme unit. This theme unit is written as a preview of the type of unit students will be required to teach during their internship. This model of teaching represents innovative instruction in that preservice teachers are given practical experiences in a community atmosphere with elementary students under the watchful eye of teachers in the field and university personnel. Preservice teachers also have experiences in evaluating prior knowledge, planning lessons, and evaluating a science or social studies theme.

Classroom teachers along with university students identify two unifying themes that will be used throughout the eight week lab sessions. One theme will emphasize social studies while the other will emphasize science. Students are given direction and guidance through a laboratory manual developed by university faculty members. Preservice students are required to do a pre-assessment of the student's prior knowledge through semantic webbing. In addition, they are required to use a KWL (What do I know? What do I What to know? What have I learned?) teaching format to expand the student's knowledge base. Preservice teachers along with public classroom teachers and university faculty plan and evaluate appropriate lessons for elementary classroom students. The lessons are evaluated each week by the classroom teachers and university faculty members. Students are required to evaluate the unit. They are given options to use various acceptable forms of evaluations including tests, portfolios, anecdotal records etc. In addition preservice teachers plan with the students, presentations that represent what they have learned to the class audience.

This model provides preservice teachers the opportunity to self reflect and evaluate in three ways. Preservice teachers provide weekly written evaluations of lessons to the university faculty. They write an overall written evaluation of the lab experience. And finally, laboratory experience can be selected for use in the

required individual portfolio (See attachment A).

A final project of the Science component of the block requires students to write an integrated unit for the grade level they plan to select for internship. The science theme assignment requires students to pick a social studies/science theme suitable for primary or upper grades. They may use text books for suggestions, the state course of studies for science and social studies, and various science textbooks found in the curriculum center (See attachment B).

In the social studies component of the block students are required to participate in a research based event centered unit. To cut down on confusion this is called an oral history project. The social studies theme assignment requires students as a class to participate in a class theme. Students choose the historical event by democratic vote. Various groups of students work on an aspect of the unifying theme. This aspect is later presented to the entire class.
(See attachment C).

It is the job of informed teacher educators to continue to look for innovative practice that will facilitate student growth. This laboratory model provides content enrichment for elementary students, application and implementation for preservice teachers and updated curriculum modeling for classroom teachers. Elementary students, preservice teachers, public school classroom teachers, and university faculty continue to find the laboratory to be a vary rewarding experience for all concerned.

Attachment A

Requirements for Individual Show Portfolio

You will be required to complete a showcase portfolio. This means that you will select five items/artifacts from this past semester that represent your best work.

A large 8 x 10 envelope with a clasp or a three ring binder should be used as a container. Use 5 x 8 cards for reflections

This reflection should be a comprehensive explanation containing
1. The meaning of the artifact
2. Why this artifact was chosen
3. How this artifact represents this course this term.

Ideas for Artifacts & Reflections
1. Duplication of an art extension that went well in the lab
2. A copy of a wonderful treasure that you came across during your research.
3. A copy of your scored exam
4. A picture of the person you interviewed

Attachment B

FORMAT OF THEME UNIT

1. State your rationale. Why teach this unit? What would be a logical reason for teaching this unit? Define and state your audience. Will this unit be for a primary or upper grade classroom? Unit should be based on requirements stated in the Alabama Course of study for Science and/or Social Studies.

2. Present background information. This should be the information you intend to teach. This should be detailed and written in narrative form. The information should be detailed enough so that the unit could be taught from just this source. (You may check your text for examples.)

3. State your goals. What do you intend to accomplish with this unit? What information do you intend to cover? These should be short statements based on background information.

4. **Write ten group lesson plans for your theme/unit. Use the format found above for writing lesson plans.** *Next write lesson plans to integrate the theme in the following areas. (Use the lesson plan format provided.) These lesson plans should be comprehensive. Unit should contain a total of 15 separate lesson plans

    a. Math
    b. Language Arts
    c. Visual Arts
    d. Performing Arts (Creative)
    e. Science/Social Studies

5. **Prepare plans for (3) center activities that would go on in this center.**

    These center activities should be written up in the text of your theme unit. You should include the following aspects.

    a. A description of the activities
    b. The materials needed to complete the activity
    c. The procedure the student will follow
    d. How you will evaluate this activity

6. **Provide a bibliography of books you will use which will include:**
   ** theme books including big books for shared reading
   a. reference
   b. children
   c. teacher
   d. shared reading
   e. literature circle/set
   f. work related to a possible author study.

Prepare a back drop of your interest center
This is where you would keep your theme books/center activities, so it should be interesting.

This unit is to be typed. The narrative parts of your paper should be double spaced.

* At least 3 lesson plans must be inquiry based.

Attachment C

Oral History Presentation

References for this assignment will be given out in class. **Please read it .**

Our class unifying theme is The Time Period (1950-1968)

Groups of students will sign up for due dates. You will be required to complete this assignment on or before the due date. (No exceptions)

Group Assignment

This assignment will require each individual in the group to complete one tape interview, each individual will complete, transcribe and summarize their own interview. (Each interview should be a different prospective on the same event.) You will need to obtain information from printed materials (books, magazines, and newspapers of the period) films, audiotapes etc. to validate your research. Your paper should reflect these resources.

You will also need an artistic representation of what you studied. This may include a backdrop, pictures, graphs, posters, charts, HyperCard presentation, slide show etc.

This representation will be shared with the entire class in the form of a group presentation. In the past, each person in the group took an active part in the presentation. Each member of the group shares his or her interview. This varies if the group has a speaker.This work will be turned in to me as a portfolio in an expanded folder or a three-ring binder. You may want to include newspaper clippings or other materials you found helpful in your research.

This portfolio will include the following:

1. Each individual is responsible for a written summary of his or her interview.

2. Each individual is responsible for a typed transcript. Your transcribed interviews should be typed. (Points will be deducted if you don't provide a beginning setting which must include direct observation features such as the layout of the premises including a drawing, time, date, etc.)

3. Written report of the research (see directions below) You may want to check out good examples.

4. A group log is a record of group meeting. Please take roll and note those members who were not present.. Each entry in the log should be dated and there should be a short section on accomplishments and plans for the future.

5. References of the other sources of information gathered should be included:
   Videos
   Films
   Newspapers
   Books

The Written Report

1. Begin the report by stating your burning question.

2. The report should be typed and double spaced.

3. The information should be reported in a narrative format (as if you are telling a story).

4. Your group will combine all of the information especially the interviews and print information to come up with a summary answer to your burning questions. The body of your paper should reference the information you are discussing.

5. The paper or report should be 5-7 pages long.
   References are expected. A lack of other references will result in a failing grade.

6. References of materials are expected to be in A.P.A. style.

Note

These portfolios will become the property of future social studies classes. Please make copies of items you would like to have back.

Grading

Presentation: (25 points)
Should include multiple presenters, artifacts including pictures and possibly a speaker

Group Paper: (25 points)
Should show evidence of research, present high quality information, typed neatly free of editing errors and should follow the directions of the assignment. Very Important, it should combine the interview and the printed data together to answer the burning question.

Interview (25 points)
Should provide the setting, a summary of the interview and your reflections, and be a high quality interview. (See class handouts for details)

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